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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

A PLEA FOR THE NURSERY.

By H. C. GASKIN.



IN furnishing and decorating our homes, are we giving due attention to that most sacred of rooms, the nursery? Is it supposed that harmony and beauty will be lost upon the unexperienced eyes of babyhood? What influence would it be likely to have if the little ears were constantly compelled to listen to harsh, discordant sounds; some savage burlesque of music? The senses of hearing and seeing are active at a very early age, and through them the character receives impressions that we are unable to estimate.

A prominent kindergarten teacher, who is a mother as well, describes her experiments in testing her own children's perceptions of color. The first

baby, at the age of two months, began to take delight in a red worsted ball that was suspended over the cradle. It became more and more fond of the toy, and when surrounded by other playthings of various colors, it invariably showed a preference for red. The mother, to verify her observations, gave the next baby a blue ball; and this experiment resulted correspondingly.

with the little ones who try to push the great upholstered chairs that resist all their efforts. Then, the frames of such chairs and sofas being so hard, as well as unmoveable, are like so many rocks for the little heads that are always bumping against them. What is wanted is rattan furniture: it is light, yielding and consistently dainty in appearance.

It seems fitting that the early springtime of life should be surrounded with everything fresh and delicately tinted, like Nature chooses for the decking of May-day—tender greens interspersed with white and pink, like the earliest flowers—light French blue may be substituted for green, or a little stronger blue may be used with pale salmon. Draperies should be light in texture—either silk or muslin.

The best covering for the floor is a single rug, so large that it will leave but a narrow margin of wood, and present edges so near the sides of the room that little feet will not be likely to trip against them. For sanitary reasons, the rug is decidedly preferable to a complete carpet, as it is sure to be taken up and shaken oftener. Genuine good rugs are expensive; the best way to obtain desirable quality and weight at a moderate price is to have Moquette, Wilton, or velvet carpet made up in rug form. Whatever the choice has been as to the prevailing colors of the room, the rug should furnish as much as possible of the neutral tints that are always wanted for harmonious effects. If it is made up from carpet, it is easy to have it as neutral as may be desired.

Painted walls will, of course, recover from depredations better than any others, and they may be done in very pleasing tints; yet they seem cold and cheerless compared with pretty papered walls. The English sanitary paper or varnished paper may be washed with a wet sponge and kept free from spots. The former is more desirable on account of its dull finish. It is called sanitary only because it will bear washing—so will varnished paper; therefore both may be considered sanitary. A great many of these papers come in tile patterns, but these look hard and mathematical; there are other styles that are more pleasing, nothing more so than a fine scroll or a chintz pattern.

A nursery should not contain a bed; it should be kept fresh and ready, that the little ones may have possession at once in



GRAND HALLWAY IN THE HOUSE OF
ALEXANDER DUMAS.

The two children, when old enough to play together, always claimed their respective colors.

As to early perception of form, I can give a striking example from my individual experience. One well remembered feature of the old homestead, which I left when I was three years of age, was the balustrade in the hall. The balusters that supported the rail were photographed upon my memory as square, and when in my new home I found round ones, I was struck by the difference. A quarter of a century later I visited the old place and took the pains to see if my mental picture was correct. It was! there were the square balusters. Now here was a case where the child, although having no name for the form, recognized it and preserved it as well as any architect could have done.

Let the furniture of the nursery present pleasing forms, those that involve beautiful curves, rather than straight lines and angles. It should be of light weight and light color. Anyone who has ever experienced the sensation of attempting to move a comfortable-looking chair belonging to a steamer, and finding it firmly fastened to the floor, knows how to sympathize

the morning. Even the daily naps should be taken elsewhere, and the nursery aired meantime.

As for ornaments, beyond a mantel set, with a clock for a center piece, nothing more than the paraphernalia of babyhood is needed to begin with; toys, large and small, will accumulate, and plenty of room must be given them. There should be pictures on the walls—good pictures. It is only too common to banish to the nursery every picture that is not likely to stand the fire of criticism to which it would be exposed elsewhere. This is an outrage upon innocence. Because the child knows nothing of art, it should not have its first perceptions awakened by false representations of art. It is astonishing how these first perceptions are remembered through life. How easy it is to recall pictures made familiar in childhood, and if they possess truth and beauty we may be grateful. It does not follow that the pictures are to be costly. Good engravings may be obtained at a moderate price. There should be a few *genre* pictures, and some good studies of flowers, if nothing more. These will soon impress the little ones and prepare them to observe what they see on other walls.